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ABSTRACT

The state superintendent, the county superintendent, and the one-room school teacher each contributed to classroom instruction in North Dakota. In 1895, the "School Text Book Law" provided for free text books and school supplies for all pupils; however, the law was not mandatory. Specific courses of study and elaborate handbooks on all subjects became common publications of the State Department of Public Instruction by the 1920s. Long periods of adjustment were necessary to balance grades, classes, and time when students in one-room schools were divided into classes one through eight (daily programs for 1901, 1908, 1918, and 1928 are included). Efforts of county superintendents of schools like Mattie Davis (1896) to initiate programs for teachers and students resulted in improved education. Teaching of patriotism and moral values was integral to the curriculum. In 1927, the state legislature passed a law requiring the conspicuous posting of the Ten Commandments where classes convened. Great emphasis was placed on phonics and penmanship. A former student, Ross Bloomquist, recalled that teaching materials he remembered from his school days included a dictionary, a globe, and a case of maps. Leila Ewen, a former teacher, recalled some unexpected teaching aids derived from the farm character of the land. (Author/CM)

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# COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY:

## Humanities on the Frontier

## READING, WRITING, ARITHMETIC AND RECITATION:

## THE CURRICULUM OF THE ONE ROOM SCHOOL

by

Dan Rylance

Grand Forks, North Dakota

March, 1981

Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities

Sponsored by the Mountain Plains Library Association

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## COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY: HUMANITIES ON THE FRONTIER

The Mountain Plains Library Association is pleased to be involved in this project documenting the country school experience. Funding of this project from the National Endowment for the Humanities, cost sharing and other contributions enabled us all to work with the several state-based Humanities Committees as well as many other state and local libraries, agencies and interested citizens. We are deeply impressed not only by the enthusiasm for this work by all concerned but by the wealth of experience brought to bear in focusing attention on—and recapturing—this important part of history, and how we got here. This project seems to identify many of the roots and "character formation" of our social, political and economic institutions in the West.

Already the main Project objective seems to be met, stimulating library usage and increasing circulation of historical and humanities materials in this region. Public interest is rising in regional, state and local history. Oral history programs are increasing with greater public participation. The study of genealogy—and the search for this information—is causing much interest in consulting—and preserving—historical materials. What has been started here will not end with this project. The immediate results will tour the entire region and be available for any who wish the program, film, and exhibit. There will be more discussion of—and action on—the issues involving the humanities and public policies, past and present. The Mountain Plains Library Association is proud to be a partner in this work, the Country School Legacy, and its contribution to understanding humanities on the frontier.

Joseph J. Anderson
Nevada State Librarian
Past President
Mountain Plains Library Association

Lewis Atherton in Main Street on the Middle Border (1954) traced the cultural, social, and economic patterns of mid-western small towns from 1865-1950. Of significant influence to the education of young people was the impact of the McGuffey school reader. Between 1850 and 1900 local school boards purchased one hundred million copies of William Holmes McGuffey's school readers.

The scope and interpretation of the McGuffey readers appealed particularly to the morality of the Middle Border. It stressed the moral superiority of village and country life over city life. It emphasized the useful and practical over the intellectual. It preached a God-centered universe and the dependence of society on religion. It acknowledged the superiority of parents and the need for children to obey their parents. The three pillars of life were the church, the school, and the family.

The virtues and vices of society were treated in verse and story. Major virtues emphasized were truth, honesty and courage as well as contentment, modesty, and kindness. Major vices identified were greed, revenge and selfishness. Major sins were treated under three themes: touch not, taste not, and handle not. Minor sins included dancing, playing cards and smoking.

While the McGuffey Reader itself may not have been adopted by all local school boards, other readers stressed similar values.

Three sections of the North Dakota state constitution adopted in 1889 mandated the establishment of a system of public schools. Section 147 instructed the state legislature to establish and maintain a system of public schools "which shall be open to all children of the state of North Dakota, and free from sectarian control." Section 149 urged instruction

with particular emphasis to values: "In all schools instruction shall be given as far as practicable in those branches of knowledge that tend to impress upon the mind the vital importance of truthfulness, temperance, purity, public spirit and respect for honest labor of every kind." Section 151 urged uniformity of courses of study and "to promote industrial, scientific and agricultural improvement."

The constitutional requirements were established by legislative acts and administered by the State Department of Public Instruction, County Superintendents, local school boards and individual teachers. No essay on curriculum and its relationship to one room schools can be adequately addressed without understanding the three layered administration of education in North Dakota. The State Superintendent, the County Superintendent and the one room school teacher each contributed their share to classroom instruction in each one room school in North Dakota.

One of the most significant laws passed by the North Dakota legislature came in 1895. The statute commonly referred to as the "School Text Book Law" provided for free text books and school supplies for all pupils in the public schools of North Dakota. The law, however, was not mandatory and much to the disappointment of its strongest supporters, the law rather provided a local option. If the majority of qualified electors in a school district signed a petition requesting a vote on the issue and if a majority of those who voted agreed, local school boards were required to provide school supplies and text books "free of charge." The law established an early preference for free supplies.

Early into statehood, the State Department of Public Instruction promoted the planting of trees in North Dakota. State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Emma Bates, the first elected female constitutional officer in North Dakota, wrote in 1895 that "It is not true that trees will

not grow in North Dakota." Rather she encouraged and appealed to patrons of schools, parents, teachers and school children to observe Arbor Day as part of the school curriculum. Bates, however, cautioned to "Plant so that life and growth result." Two trees planted with care and encouraged to grow was more important than planting ten trees to die. For more than two decades Arbor Day was a significant day in the curriculum of all school children in North Dakota.

The creation of the "North Dakota Teachers Reading Circle" in 1890 was one of the most successful programs promulgated by the State Department of Public Instruction. The program's goal was "the improvement of its members in literary, scientific and professional knowledge, and promotion of the habits of self-culture." County superintendents of schools were appointed county managers and specific books were selected each year. A four year program was laid out for each participant and a diploma was presented with the completion of the course. Teachers as well as students were eligible to participate in the program. Examination questions were issued each year by the State Superintendent. Books selected in 1892 included "Fiske's Civil Government of the United States," "Ogden's Elements of Ethical Style," and "Evangeline." 1893 selections included "White's Elements of Pedagogy" and "Schoolmaster in Literature."

Specific courses of study and elaborate handbooks on all subjects became common publications of the Department by the 1920s. "A Handbook of Literature" published in 1928 discussed the aims of teaching literature in the rural schools:

1. Stirring the imagination and giving the eyes of the mind something to see, so that no matter how hard or uninteresting our lot in life we may be conscious of touches of beauty and have the words in which to express that beauty.

2. Creating in the mind a wealth of spiritual resources which will make us happy in spite of surroundings.
3. Giving words in which to express feelings and longings which have been described thus: "I would that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me."
4. Making the joys, sorrows, temptations and triumphs we read about our own and thus causing us to understand all sorts of experiences whether we have been through them or not.
5. Building up social ideals (democracy and service) by reading and hearing poems, essays, speeches and the conversation of characters of fiction.
6. Establishing high moral standards by reading and hearing of noble lives which were animated by patience, courage, unselfishness, truthfulness, kindness, mercy, justice, patriotism and love, examples of which may be found in such poems as "Somebody's Mother", "Little Giffon", "Horatius," etc.

One of the significant changes which took place in the curriculum of all one room schools was the division of students into classes one through eight. The change was precipitated by school reformers who argued that grading had done so much to improve the quality of education in town schools and it could do the same for country schools. The comparison lacked reality, however, because no extra teachers were available in the one room schools. The change destroyed a natural grouping of students established in one room schools. It also increased the number of classes taught per day and shortened the amount of time spent on each class. The change also forced a patching system to occur which either alternated subjects by day or year or combined subjects on a regular basis.

Andrew Berg, a former county superintendent of schools and state inspector

of rural schools in North Dakota was convinced that much of the poor teaching he saw in rural schools could "be traced directly to this faulty organization of classes."

Berg wrote:

> "One room teachers trying to conduct as many as forty-five classes per day were not unusual and class periods as short as five minutes were common. Young, untrained, inexperienced teachers in situations of that kind could, of course, not accomplish very much and the difference in effectiveness between the town schools and the one room schools became greater instead of less."

Berg demonstrated that the daily program used in rural schools before the one year grade plan of town schools was imposed had an organization much better adapted to the needs of one room schools. He analyzed the daily programs of several one room schools before and after the imposition of graded classes. Norway District Number 3 in Traill County provided the following daily programs for 1901, 1908, 1918 and 1928.

The 1902 daily program which was before the mandatory graded classes had a total of 22 classes. Of those classes 3 met for 20 minutes; 15 met for 15 minutes; and 4 met for 10 minutes. There was also only one alteration, history and reading for the fourth and fifth grades. The 1918 daily program which was after the establishment of graded classes had a total of 27 classes. Of those classes 1 met for 20 minutes; 10 met for 15 minutes; and 16 met for 10 minutes. The 1918 program also shows 11 different alterations of subjects. The 1928 daily program was an attempt to get back to natural groupings and pay less attention to graded classes. It also had only one distinct alteration, Geography and Physiology in the seventh grade.

The impact of the grade concept on one room schools was significant. And, it took long periods of adjustment to balance grades, classes, and the time spent on each class.

Norway Number 3

School Year 1928-1929

Enrollment 24

Daily Program

| Begin | Time | Subject | Grades | Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9:00 | 15 | Opening Exercises | All | |
| 9:15 | 15 | Reading | 1,2 | C |
| 9:30 | 15 | Reading | 3 | |
| 9:45 | 15 | Reading | 4,5,6 | B |
| 10:00 | 15 | Language(3) Literature(2) | 7,8 | A |
| 10:15 | 15 | Numbers | 1,2,3 | C |
| 10:30 | 15 | Recess-Supervised Play | All | |
| 10:45 | 15 | Arithmetic | 4,5,6 | B |
| 11:00 | 15 | Arithmetic | 7,8 | A |
| 11:15 | 10 | Word Drill & Phonics | 1,2 | C |
| 11:25 | 10 | Word Drill & Phonics | 3 | |
| 11:35 | 15 | Spelling | 3,4,5,6,7,8 | A,B |
| 11:50 | 10 | Writing | All | |
| 12:00 | 60 | Supervised Lunch,Free Play | All | |
| 1:00 | 10 | Citizenship | 8 | |
| 1:10 | 15 | Reading & Language | 1,2 | C |
| 1:25 | 15 | Language & Construction | 3 | |
| 1:40 | 20 | Geography(3) Physiology(2) | 7 | |
| 2:00 | 15 | Geography(2) Physiology(3) | 4,5,6 | B |
| 2:15 | 15 | History | 7,8 | A |
| 2:30 | 15 | Recess-Supervised Play | All | |
| 2:45 | 15 | Reading & Spelling | 1,2 | C |
| 3:00 | 15 | Language | 4,5,6 | B |
| 3:15 | 15 | Reading | 3 | |
| 3:30 | 15 | Teacher Help | All | |
| 3:45 | 15 | Agriculture & Nature Study | 7,8 | A |

Norway Number 3

School Year 1918-1919

Enrollment 32

Daily Program

| Begin | Time | Subject | Grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9:00 | 10 | Opening Exercises | All |
| 9:10 | 10 | Reading or Physiology | 7,8 |
| 9:20 | 10 | Reading or Physiology | 6 |
| 9:30 | 10 | Reading | 1B |
| 9:40 | 10 | Reading | 1A |
| 9:50 | 10 | Reading | 2 |
| 10:00 | 10 | Reading | 3 |
| 10:10 | 10 | Reading or Physiology | 4 |
| 10:20 | 10 | Civics or Arithmetic | 7,8 |
| 10:30 | 15 | Recess | All |
| 10:45 | 15 | Numbers or Phonics | 1A,1B |
| 11:00 | 10 | Numbers | 2 |
| 11:10 | 10 | Arithmetic | 3 |
| 11:20 | 15 | Arithmetic | 4 |
| 11:35 | 15 | Arithmetic | 6 |
| 11:50 | 10 | Writing | All |
| 12:00 | 60 | Noon | All |
| 1:00 | 10 | Language or Physiology | 1,2 |
| 1:10 | 15 | Language or Physiology | 3 |
| 1:25 | 10 | Language or Geography | 4 |
| 1:35 | 10 | Language or History | 6 |
| 1:45 | 10 | Grammar or History | 7,8 |
| 1:55 | 15 | Geography or Nature Study | 6 |
| 2:10 | 20 | Geography or Agriculture | 7,8 |
| 2:30 | 15 | Recess | All |
| 2:45 | 15 | Reading or Phonics | 1,2 |
| 3:00 | 15 | Reading & Spelling | 3 |
| 3:15 | 15 | Spelling | 4 |
| 3:30 | 15 | Spelling | 6 |
| 3:45 | 15 | Spelling | 7,8 |

Norway Number 3

School Year 1908-1909

Enrollment 31

Daily Program

| Begin | Time | Subject | Grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9:00 | 10 | Opening Exercises | All |
| 9:10 | 10 | Reading | 1A |
| 9:20 | 15 | Reading | 1B |
| 9:35 | 10 | Reading | 3 |
| 9:45 | 10 | Reading | 2 |
| 9:55 | 15 | Arithmetic | 2 |
| 10:10 | 15 | Arithmetic | 4 |
| 10:25 | 10 | Arithmetic | 5 |
| 10:35 | 10 | Recess | All |
| 10:45 | 15 | Numbers | 1 |
| 11:00 | 10 | Numbers | 2 |
| 11:10 | 10 | Reading | 2 |
| 11:20 | 10 | Reading | 3 |
| 11:30 | 15 | Reading | 4 |
| 11:45 | 15 | Reading | 5 |
| 12:00 | 60 | Noon | All |
| 1:00 | 10 | Opening Exercises | All |
| 1:10 | 10 | Reading | 1 |
| 1:20 | 10 | Reading | 2 |
| 1:30 | 10 | Language | 1,2 |
| 1:40 | 15 | Language | 3 |
| 1:55 | 15 | Language | 4 |
| 2:10 | 10 | Language | 5 |
| 2:20 | 10 | Writing or Drawing | All |
| 2:30 | 15 | Recess | All |
| 2:45 | 15 | Physiology | 4 |
| 3:00 | 10 | Physiology | 5 |
| 3:10 | 10 | Physiology | 3 |
| 3:20 | 10 | Spelling | 1,2 |
| 3:30 | 15 | Spelling | 3,4 |
| 3:45 | 10 | Geography | 5 |
| 3:55 | 10 | Spelling | 5 |

Norway Number 3

School Year 1901-1902

Enrollment 25

Daily Program

| Begin | Time | Subject | Grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9:00 | 5 | Opening Exercises | All |
| 9:05 | 15 | Reading | 1 |
| 9:20 | 15 | Reading | 2 |
| 9:35 | 15 | General Lesson | All |
| 9:50 | 5 | Rest | All |
| 9:55 | 15 | History or Reading | 4,5 |
| 10:10 | 20 | History | 7 |
| 10:30 | 15 | Recess | All |
| 10:45 | 10 | Numbers | 1 |
| 10:55 | 10 | Numbers | 2 |
| 11:05 | 20 | Arithmetic | 4 |
| 11:25 | 20 | Arithmetic | 7 |
| 11:45 | 15 | General Lessons | All |
| 12:00 | 60 | Noon | All |
| 1:00 | 5 | Opening Exercises | All |
| 1:05 | 10 | Spelling | 4,5,6 |
| 1:15 | 10 | Reading | 1 |
| 1:25 | 15 | Reading | 2 |
| 1:40 | 5 | Rest | All |
| 1:45 | 15 | Geography | 4,5 |
| 2:00 | 15 | Geography | 7 |
| 2:15 | 15 | Writing | All |
| 2:30 | 15 | Recess | All |
| 2:45 | 15 | Language & Spelling | 1 |
| 3:00 | 15 | Language & Spelling | 2 |
| 3:15 | 15 | Language | 4 |
| 3:30 | 15 | Language | 5 |
| 3:45 | 15 | General Lessons | All |

When Mattie Davis was elected Cass County Superintendent of Schools in 1896, she spent most of her first year getting acquainted with one room schools in her county. She recalled that "the more we became acquainted with the schools of the county, the more evident it appeared that there was a decided lack of uniformity in the work as well as lack of effort in some cases." She spent the next twenty years of her life trying to improve the quality of education in her county. Her efforts reveal much about the conditions of rural education, teachers, and the curriculum.

To improve the quality of teaching in Cass County, Davis initiated a series of programs. In 1897 she established a summer institute for Cass County teachers. The school ran for 3 weeks, 6 days a week and had an enrollment of 175 teachers the first year. Davis, in cooperation with neighboring Barnes County compiled a course of study divided into 72 consecutive units for 8 grades. To encourage better attendance, the county issued at the end of each year Certificates of Perfect Attendance.

The Cass County superintendent also initiated several important programs for students. Each fall an empty loose-leaf book was sent to each school. The teacher was required to return it at the end of the year with student papers in story writing, number work, map drawing and other subjects. The best papers became part of the Cass County Exhibit at the State Fair and stipends were presented to the schools whose work won recognition. The county office also established a Pupils Reading Circle and an annual spring contest. The first spring contest was held in 1906 and was called the "Corn Growing Contest." Each contestant was sent 600 kernals of golden dent corn with rules for preparing the soil, planting and cultivation. All contestants were to grow the corn and in the fall bring 10 ears of the best corn, a story of 300 words describing the growing of corn and read his essay at the fall

festival. Over 200 entered the first year and 50 students participated in the final contest. Awards of $12.00, $8.00 and $5.00 were awarded to the first, second, and third place winners. The county also initiated an annual spring meet held every May in Casselton. In its best years over 1,200 children were participating in athletic, public speaking, spelling, and music events.

The individual efforts of county superintendents of schools like Mattie Davis were instrumental in the improvement of education. The training of better teachers and the innovation of extra-curricular activities for students added quality and variety to the one room school experience.

While state offices and county offices assisted in the organization and improvement of rural education, the individual teacher worked alone daily in the environment of the one room school. The following themes about this daily experience are gleaned from oral interviews, state publications, primary and secondary accounts and other sources. Although the themes are not comprehensive, they do suggest a certain educational milieu about the educational process occurring in one room schools in North Dakota.

The teaching of patriotism was an intregal part of the curriculum. All readers emphasized the positive features of American government and the individual contributors of American presidents. Special days were set aside to honor Washington and Lincoln. Teachers and students fondly remember these as important events in the yearly cycle of activities. Criticism of the role of government or negative personal aspects of American leaders were not part of the educational process. The American government and its leaders like the parents of the school children must always be treated with respect and trusted. Helen Barrett who taught in Stutsman County and served for many years as deputy county superintendent of schools recalled

"For the one room school, almost a page of ancient history, I have a warm feeling." It was there that "patriotism and the golden rule were taught."

Patriotism was always promoted by the State Department of Public Instruction. The Fourth Biennial Report in 1896 stated how gratifying it was "to see the flag, loved at home and honored abroad, floating from the rural school house." But the same report urged because of North Dakota's large proportion of foreign residents that it was "eminently proper to keep, as an object lesson, the emblem of our national honor, of our national sacrifices, of the blood and money spent for national preservation, before the eyes of the children and future citizens of our beloved commonwealth." The bicentennial anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Franklin in 1906 prompted a circular from the State Department of Public Instruction to all schools in North Dakota. It urged that this day "should not pass without some recognition from the schools of this state, of the services rendered this nation at a time when it tried men's souls to be patriotic."

Moral values were also taught in school. Books and readers emphasized the McGuffey code of morality. Loyalty to country, obedience to parents, respect for mother and belief in God were common moral values shared by teacher and student alike. Signe Hanson who taught in one room schools in the Red River Valley organized her school into a Temperance Union and had all of them sign the pledge to never "smoke or drink." Myrtle Mockel like many of her fellow teachers began the day with the flag salute, Pledge of the Allegiance, a patriotic song, a verse from the Bible and a brief non-sectarian prayer.

A circular issued by the State Department of Public Instruction in 1896 pertaining to the observance of parents day noted that the purposes of our public schools include "the teaching of patriotism, integrity and

morality," and that parents day should be "made one of the few most important days of the year." The circular urged all to observe the day to teach children "that before the individual, before the school, before the state, stands in holiness and admiration, the home and family."

The most demonstrative symbol of values in North Dakota schools centered on the posting of the Ten Commandments "where classes convene for instruction." The statute was passed by the 1927 state legislature and became law on July 1, 1927. It required the Ten Commandments to be posted "in a conspicuous place in every school room" and in every school "which is supported by appropriations or by tax levies." The State Department of Public Instruction was charged with the administrative authority to print the placards and charge an amount to cover the cost of printing and distribution.

In September of 1927, Bertha Palmer, Superintendent of Public Instruction issued a circular to promulgate the recently passed law. The circular discussed the proper manner in which the Ten Commandments should be posted, the history of the statute, and the artistic value of the Ten Commandments. The Superintendent wrote that the circular was also written to call attention "to this object of beauty and ethical value, which is now the possession of the school."

The State Department interpreted "in a conspicuous place" to be in the front or near the front of each classroom. It was also deemed necessary and proper to have each placard under glass and in a permanent frame. The wire and the hanger should not show above the frame "as such a line would destroy its perfect form" and it should hang low enough to read it easily "on a level with the eyes of the children."

Great care and detail went into the design of the placard. It was to be a perfect rectangle as a contribution of the ancient Greeks. The border

design consisted of the forms of the cross and triangle which together symbolized adherance to the pureness of body, mind, and soul. The color blue, the dominant color of the design, represented "the canopy over all the earth." Red was selected as a second color to give the composition "warmth and life." Ivory as a background color symbolized "the skein of civilization against which the two colors (blue and red), emblematic of the mingled good and bad are placed."

Finally the circular denied the religious intent of the Ten Commandments. They were not posted upon the walls of the schoolrooms in North Dakota for any religious reason but "because these principles are the basis of all human relations, not only in the Code for North Dakota but in all western civilization." While the statute made no mention of use beyond the posting of the Ten Commandments, the circular did by stating they "should be memorized." The Department charged $1.00 plus mailing for the official copy of the state's Ten Commandments.

A great emphasis was placed on phonics and penmanship. The "Beacon Method" of phonics appeared to be the most popular approach. Many teachers recalled the method which included books, charts, flash cards of words, of phrases and phonics. Erna Froemming started teaching in one room schools in 1926 and stated "the good old Beacon method was my first experience in a strong phonetic program and it brought good results in reading and spelling." Edna Kona recalled a first grade Russian-American farm boy, "Little Joe" and his first participation in a phonics lesson. "I told the class P was the sound of the pump that went p-p. Next day Joe told us that his pump didn't go p-p; it went ch-ch." Penmanship like phonics was a required subject. Most teachers had to earn a Palmer Method Certificate to get education credits for penmanship.

CHAPTER 217
(H. B. No. 170—Boecke! and Meidlinger.)

TEN COMMANDMENTS IN CLASS ROOMS

Act Providing for the Printing and Placing of Placards containing the Ten Commandments of the Christian Religion, in School Rooms and Class Rooms of Public Institutions of Learning.

*Be It Enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the State of North Dakota:*

§ 1. It shall be the duty of the School Board, Board of Trustees, or Board of Education of every school district, and the President of each and every institution of higher education in the state, which is supported by appropriations or by tax ties in this state, to display a placard containing the Ten Commandments of the Christian religion in a conspicuous place every school room, class room or other place in said school where classes convene for instruction.

§ 2. The Department of Public Instruction shall have authority to print such placards and shall be permitted to charge for them such an amount as will cover the cost of printing and distribution.

Approved, March 3, 1927.

## SCHOOL and STATE LANDS

CHAPTER 218
(H. B. No. 208—Thompson of Burleigh.)

LEASE AND SALE OF ISLANDS FORMED IN NAVIGABLE STREAMS AND DECLARED PROPERTY OF STATE

Act To Provide for the Leasing and Sale of Islands Formed in Beds of Navigable Streams. Whereas, there is no law in this State which provides for the leasing and sale of islands formed in the beds of navigable streams in this State, now therefore

*Be It Enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the State of North Dakota:*

1. All islands formed in the beds of streams which are navigable and declared the property of the State under the provisions of Section 5475 of the Compiled Laws for 1913, shall be leased and sold by the Board of University and School Lands in the same manner as other lands now under control of said Board are leased and sold.

§ 2. All proceeds derived from the leasing and sale of said lands, shall become a part of the common school funds and be distributed as directed by law.

§ 3. Whereas, there is no law upon the statute books covering the subject matter of this act, therefore an emergency is hereby declared to exist and this bill shall take effect from and after its passage and approval.

Approved, March 5, 1927.



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Recess was an important part of the daily schedule where all participated and none observed. It was an optimum situation without the luxury or expense of modern athletic equipment. Young and old, big and small, male and female, student and teacher all participated. As Hilda Ellingson remembered:

> The games at recess--to be able to play with the "big kids." All the children played games together regardless of age or grade, and what fun it was when the teacher would come out and play with us. She could run even though she wore heels and a long skirt.

Lunch time competed with recess and Velma Corner recalled the nostalgia of it:

> At noon, in the little school, the lunch pails--Karo Syrup, Leaf-Lard--have been opened. Oh, the wonderful smells--cold sausage, garlic aroma, and chicken legs, peanut butter and syrup sandwiches, wedges of cake, and hard-boiled eggs!

C. Ross Bloomquist recalled some of the teaching material used in the one room school he attended in Foster County. He distirctly remembered the tattered Webster unabridged dictionary. Although seldom used to look up the meaning of words, it was often used by students on rainy recesses who "often amused themselves by looking at the insect illustrations." Bloomquist also recalled the 12 inch globe suspended from the ceiling over the teacher's desk and the case of maps on rollers which hung over the south blackboard which contained maps of each continent and of the United States. When a brand new map of North Dakota appeared during Bloomquist's upper grades, the teacher required each student to memorize the names of all the state's 53 counties in sequence starting in the Northeast corner of the state. Finally Bloomquist listed the books he had read while attending the one room school:

I remember reading "Robinson Crusoe", Dickens "Tale of Two Cities" and "David Copperfield", Scott's "Ivanhoe", Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome", Bulwer-Litton's "The Last Days of Pompeii", Mark Twain's "Prince and the Pauper." Others were "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," "Anne of Green Gables" and sequels "Little Women" and "Little Men", several bird books and an oversize "Mammals of North America."

The sparse population and the farm character of the land sometimes produced unexpected teaching aids. Leila Ewen, who taught for many years in the Rural School Department at Minot State, recalled such an incident:

One time I was giving a demonstration in a first grade reading class. One of the boys kept wiggling and wiggling and I was trying to conduct classes. Finally, I could stand it no longer and I said to the little fellow "Give me what you have in your pocket," and held out my hand. He dropped into my palm, I'll bet you'll never guess--five baby mice. I had a whole handful of them. What would you do? You are introducing vocabulary and have your hand full of mice? Well, we had to find a place for them. We got a box; we poked some holes in it; we put padding in it; we covered it up; we did lots of things, those five boys and I, then we started our reading lesson. We wrote,

"Jerome has five baby mice.
We put them in a box.
We covered the box.
We put holes in the cover of the box.
The mice will live."

And the kiddies read that, of course, they read it, because they had made their own unit of work.

Perhaps the best assessment of the one room education comes from Olga Peterson, an early North Dakota teacher:

> I believe that in spite of poorly qualified teachers, one room meagerly equipped school buildings and limited materials, the child at the time I taught in country schools did get the fundamentals and, if at all able, could read, write and do practical arithmetic.

## NOTES ON ESSAY

Most of the primary documents utilized in this essay from the Department of Public Instruction are identified within the body of the essay. Two secondary works Lewis Atherton's Main Street on the Middle Border 1954 and In ketrospect: Teaching in North Dakota published by the North Dakota Retired Teachers Association 1976 was also used in this essay. The work of Mattie Davis was located in her manuscript collection housed at the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies at North Dakota State University in Fargo, North Dakota. The work of Andrew Berg was found in his M.S. thesis written at the University of North Dakota in 1929 entitled "A Daily Program for the One-Room Schools of North Dakota."